

# CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 8 October 2013

## Australia's wave season sets sail

The 2013-14 international cruise season has officially started, with a record number of ships set to visit our shores this summer.

AMID the war ships, tall ships and a prince on a yacht on Sydney Harbour for the Royal Australian Navy's International Fleet Review,

the first international cruise ship also arrived on the weekend, kicking off Australia's peak - and busiest ever - cruising period.

Royal Caribbean's *Rhapsody of the Seas* docked at dawn on 04 October, ready for its seventh consecutive season down under.

The six-month period will see more than 40 ships making around 600 calls to Australian ports - many for the first time.

Among the 15 maiden calls are *Seabourn Sojourn's* visits to Eden, Geelong, Kangaroo Island, Burnie, Bunbury, Geraldton and Exmouth, and APT's *MS Caledonian Sky* in Darwin, Port Essington, Wessell Islands, Macquarie Island and Norfolk Island.

Western Australia also welcomes its only locally based ship, Cruise & Maritime Voyages' *Astor*, which is scheduled to reach Fremantle on 11 December for a series of cruises in Australia and Asia.

According to Cruise Lines International Association Australasia, 2013-14 will also see an unprecedented 202 roundtrip sailings from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Fremantle, offering a record number of opportunities for people to cruise from their doorstep.

Keep up to date with the movements of visiting ships with the **Cruise Weekly** Cruise Calendar (see right).

### New Zealand opens today

THE cruise season has also commenced in New Zealand, where *Radiance of the Seas* sailed into Picton this morning.

The Royal Caribbean ship will be followed this week by Princess Cruises' *Sea Princess* visiting the Bay of Islands, Napier, Tauranga, Wellington, Akaroa and Port Chalmers.

This year brings fewer ships and passengers than the record-breaker of 2012 but Cruise New Zealand anticipates "a big explosion" after the expansion of the Panama Canal in 2015 when "lots of ships that weren't able to come here before can more easily come here," said CNZ executive officer Raewyn Tan.

## Cruise Calendar

**Cruise Weekly's** cruise calendar details upcoming port calls of passenger cruise ships at various destinations in Australia and New Zealand.

### SYDNEY

<i>Pacific Pearl</i> (WBCT)	Wed 9 Oct
<i>Pacific Jewel</i> (WBCT)	Thur 10 Oct
<i>Dawn Princess</i> (WBCT)	Fri 11 Oct
<i>Radiance of the Seas</i> (OPT)	Fri 11 Oct
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i> (OPT)	Sat 12 Oct
<i>Radiance of the Seas</i> (OPT)	Sun 13 Oct
<i>Pacific Jewel</i> (WBCT)	Mon 14 Oct

### BRISBANE

<i>Sea Princess</i>	Thu 10 Oct
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Sat 12 Oct
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Mon 13 Oct

### DARWIN

<i>Sun Princess</i>	Wed 9 Oct
<i>Coral Princess</i>	Thur 10 Oct

### AUCKLAND

<i>Sea Princess</i>	Fri 11 Oct
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### WELLINGTON

<i>Sea Princess</i>	Mon 14 Oct
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### TAURANGA

<i>Sea Princess</i>	Sat 12 Oct
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### Island Passage relaunched

AFTER an extensive makeover, Island Escape Cruises is set to reintroduce its luxury small ship *Island Passage* on an inaugural series of New Zealand fiordland cruises in December.

The vessel's hull will be completely sandblasted and repainted, and cabins refurbished with new carpet, furniture and luxury bed linens, while upgraded bathrooms will be stocked with L'Occitane toiletries.

For the first time a cruise director will also join the shipboard team.

Limited space is still available on selected sailings - see [www.islandescapecruises.com](http://www.islandescapecruises.com).



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## Rivers set for clean-up campaign

Uniworld has initiated an environmental sustainability project which encourages cruise lines to better protect the world's rivers.

**UNIWORLD** Boutique River Cruises and its non-profit arm, TreadRight, have produced a an industry-first guide of strategies to reduce water and energy use and waste generation on river cruise ships.

The move aims to catch up with ocean cruising, which has invested heavily in "greener cruising" over the past decade.

Speaking exclusively to **Cruise Weekly** from Los Angeles, the line's president Guy Young said it was time for river cruise operators to take action.

"The big ships do a lot of work collectively to protect the world's oceans but there is not the same focus on the river cruising side, so this is the first step to get the industry to take more notice of the rivers we cruise on.

"It's important to ensure sustainable river cruising, considering how fast it's growing."

Young said that the sector's recent rapid growth had its benefits.

"Standards are getting better and the newer vessels are more efficient and advanced in their water recycling and waste management," he said.

Egypt is top of Young's list for improvements.

"With almost 300 river cruise ships on the Nile, you can have six of them tied up in Luxor, giving off fumes, so there is huge potential to improve the environment in Egypt," he said.

"But even in Europe, there is so much more that we could be doing."

The best practices offered in the guide, which provides training materials to help companies implement the recommendations, come from investigations of environmental performance and management collected through audits on 12 Uniworld ships in Egypt and Europe.

The sixty-page guide, 'Environmental Sustainability for River Cruising', can be downloaded from the Travel Foundation website at [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk).

### Ship ordered for Asia

**GENTING** Hong Kong Ltd, the largest shareholder in Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd, has ordered a 1,682-passenger ship from Meyer Werft, scheduled for delivery in October 2016.

The company said it plans to use the vessel to serve China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, where it will be based.

### New Crystal Cruises chief

**EDIE** Bornstein, who left Azamara Club Cruises two weeks ago, has turned up as Crystal Cruises' new president and chief operating officer.

Bornstein, most recently Azamara's senior vice president of sales and marketing, replaces Gregg Michel.

### Viking river crashes continue

**VIKING** River Cruises has had a bad run in Europe, clocking up five accidents in the past five weeks.

The most recent, on the Rhine on Saturday, involved *Viking Bragi* colliding with a retaining wall near Duisburg, Germany.

The vessel was then bumped by a small cargo ship and several passengers suffered minor cuts, but did not require medical attention, according to the company.

Authorities inspected the *Bragi*, which has continued to sail as scheduled.

The incident is the fifth in just over a month and the second in a week, according to a report in Cruise Critic.

Last week the *Viking Sun* hit a pier at a quarry, while the *Viking Forseti* had three accidents in September.

No one was injured in any of the incidents.



**THE** dreaded norovirus, which affects thousands of cruise passengers every year, could soon sink into history.

In the US, an experimental vaccine trial has shown promising results, with researchers reporting it reduced symptoms by 52%.

The tests provide optimism that a vaccine could be developed for the highly contagious illness, known as the "cruise ship virus".

Norovirus occurs in many other confined areas, such as schools, childcare centres and hospitals, and can spread through infected food or water, contaminated surfaces and even through the air.

The study doesn't sound like much fun – 98 volunteers drank water laced with the virus and were then injected with either the vaccine or a placebo.

26 people given the vaccine and 29 people given the placebo were infected.

Ten people in the vaccinated group had mild, moderate or severe vomiting and/or diarrhoea compared with 20 in the non-vaccinated group.

Currently there is no treatment or cure for the virus, the most common cause of viral gastroenteritis in children and adults.

### Storm delays Carnival ships

**TWO** Carnival Cruise Line ships, bound for their US homeport in New Orleans, were delayed over the weekend due to a tropical storm tracking toward the northern Gulf Coast.

*Carnival Elation* was scheduled to return on Saturday from a five-day trip and *Carnival Conquest* on Sunday from a seven-day cruise, but both arrived back yesterday.

Each ship's next cruises will be cut short, with Carnival to provide partial refunds.

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## Crew Profile

This week *Cruise Weekly* speaks with **Henk Klos, Captain** onboard **APT/AmaWaterways' AmaLyra**.

For how long have you been working on cruise ships?  
13 years in total.

When did you join AmaWaterways?

In 2009 I became Captain of the *AmaLyra* in 2010, then in 2012, I was appointed Corporate Fleet Captain, liaising between the ships and the office. As much as I enjoyed this role, I really missed sailing and the daily contact with passengers and crew. So this year I rejoined the *AmaLyra* as Captain.



What is the best thing about working for AmaWaterways?

The company has a very special working culture. It's very much a team environment, with each of us 100% committed to supporting each other to deliver the best service to our guests. We're very much like a close knit family.

What is your favorite cruising destination?

The Rhine River with its castles and cities, such as Cologne and Koblenz; the Mosel River with its wine region and the city of Trier; Wertheim on the Main River or Würzburg; and the Danube with Regensburg, Passau, Vienna & Budapest.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Sailing. It's in my blood. I also enjoy the interaction with passengers and crew.

Do you have any embarrassing cruise stories you can share with us?

Two guests, after a swim, decided to hang up some wet swimming gear in their cabin to dry. Unfortunately they chose to use the sprinkler system as their clothes hanger, smashing the glass and setting it off. Instead of wet swimmers, they ended up with an incredibly wet cabin!

How do you spend your holidays/vacation when you return home?

Due to the busy summer sailing schedule, I tend to spend my time off relaxing at home. The Caribbean is always a popular choice for me.

## Voyager of the Seas special

**ROYAL** Caribbean is offering fares from just \$1249 per person twin share in an interior stateroom aboard a 14 night New Zealand Adventure cruise on its *Voyager of the Seas*.

The deal applies to the 23 Nov 2013 Sydney departure of the vessel which takes in Auckland, Tauranga, Napier, Wellington, Dunedin, Dusty Sound, Doubtful Sound and Milford Sound as well as Tasmania.

Sister brand Celebrity Cruises also has a \$1,999 fare available on a 22 Dec *Celebrity Solstice* Sydney departure cruising for 12 nights to Auckland.

Travel agents have details of both deals or call 1800 754 500 for more info.

## Divina entertainment offer

**MSC** Cruises has unveiled some of the wide array of entertainment and activities which will be available on its *MSC Divina* when it is deployed in the Caribbean next month.

According to cruise director Andre Schlemmer, the ship will premiere "several exciting musical productions, headline entertainers and comedians, new family programs and an outdoor cinema for first-run films, classes and special broadcast events".

Caribbean sailings will include Dueling Pianos in the Jazz Bar as well as "comedic magician" Levent and Scott Record, the "singing comedy impressionist".

And in keeping with its Italian heritage *MSC Divina* will also showcase current favourites including a special presentation of Verdi's *La Traviata* opera; *Sogno Italiano*, a tribute to Italian popular music; the Michael Jackson-themed *Starwalker* show; and *Billy Bones*, inspired by the Pirates of the Caribbean.

Onboard enrichment programs include stargazing classes, wine tasting, mixology classes, jewellery making, Italian lessons, cooking classes and daily ballroom dancing instruction.

## Christmas with True North

**NORTH** Star Cruises will offer a very special Christmas experience this year, with a four night voyage departing Sydney Harbour on Christmas night, 25 December.

The 'Sydney Rocks' cruise will put passengers in the front row for the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race on Boxing Day before cruising to the Hawkesbury river.

A second departure will showcase the famous Sydney New Year's Eve fireworks display - for details see your travel agent or [www.northstarcruises.com.au](http://www.northstarcruises.com.au).

## Discover the World brochure

### DISCOVER

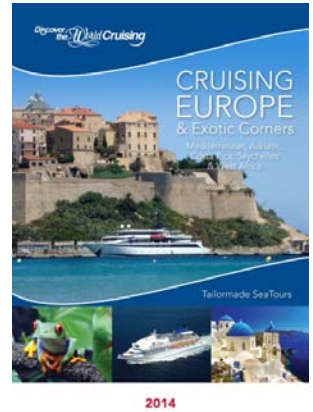
the World  
Cruising has released its new 2014 Cruising Europe and Exotic Corners brochure, which the company says is "filled with cruise and tour holidays from the exciting to the unusual".

### Product

featured in the brochure includes the intimate yacht/small ship experiences of Variety Cruises and the more conventional offering of Louis Cruises, along with a huge array of pre and post cruise Seatour extensions and hotel stays.

Earlybird offers include bonus fare savings of 20% per person on select 2014 voyages when booked by 31 Jan 2014, while there are attractive SMART fares available with Louis Cruises on 4, 5 and 8 day voyages throughout Greece and Turkey.

See your travel agent for more information or call 1800 OCEANS (1800 623 267).



## Mumbai-Goa-Maldives plan

**NEWPORT** Maritime hopes to start a cruise service in India next year, basing the ex-MV *Gemini* (to be renamed *MV Asian Pride*) and the ex-MV *Crown Majesty* (to be renamed *MV Asian Song*) in Mumbai.

Operating under the brand name Royal Asian Cruise Line, the new line would offer a seven-night itinerary on the Mumbai-Goa-Maldives-Colombo-Mumbai route between October and April and an 11-night itinerary to Dubai from May to September.

Newport Maritime, which is based in Chennai and registered in the Bahamas, is seeking concessions on corporate tax, customs duty, excise duty, sales tax, port charges and liquor licence and other incentives to begin operations in 2014.

India's shipping ministry is evaluating the proposal but a decision on granting incentives to the cruise ship operator rests with other government departments, a ministry spokesperson told local media.

Currently, no international ocean cruise lines use an Indian port as a home port.

Louis Cruise Lines attempted a service based in Cochin in 2010 but pulled out after 40 days, citing the high charges levied by the harbour.

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## Rebirth of the Ganges

by: Louise Goldsbury

**COULD** the Ganges become the next hot spot for river cruises? On an inspection trip I joined last month, four major companies were scoping out the destination.

Although two operators were not yet ready to commit (or tell me!), Scenic Tours and Travel Indochina confirmed they'd be chartering a brand new luxury ship in 2015: the *Ganges Voyager*.

The only tourist vessel currently exploring the Ganges - and its tributary, the Hooghly - is the *Bengal Ganga*.

This 56-passenger ship, which launched in 2009, was the first in 200 years to take travellers on overnight cruises in the region. Over the previous two centuries, the legendary waterway had been gradually abandoned as the country's opium trade died off and traffic moved to the railways.

The Ganges also gained a reputation for being polluted, while India has long been regarded as hard work for a tourist.

But things are changing. More than 100 factories have been closed down, and in 2011 the West Bengal government initiated a beautification project along the riverbank from Kolkata (Calcutta).

Ghats will be renovated, gardens landscaped and footpaths illuminated. One town - an old French settlement - already has a promenade lined with ornate, almost Parisian lanterns.

The streets in most villages are still very littered, but the water looks silty rather than dirty, and it definitely doesn't smell at all.

The vast majority of the scenery is lovely and green - lush rice fields, spice crops and orchards, interspersed with amazing temples and the occasional British-influenced palace.

Most sacred sites are immaculate, boasting well-maintained buildings, landscaped gardens and spotless grounds.

The *Bengal Ganga* owner and director of Heritage Cruises is now partnering with the US-based Haimark to build the boutique-style *Ganges Voyager*, which promises to bring a new level of glamour to Indian river cruising.

The ship will have 28 modern fully equipped suites, a sun deck, spa, gym, lounge and dining room serving a mix of Western and Indian cuisine.

So what's the itinerary like? Short answer: fascinating, relaxing, diverse; a cultural and spiritual revelation.

Every day offers visits to historical and religious sites (Hindu, Buddhist and Hare Krishna) and villages frozen in time.

The other main attraction of this journey is that hardly anyone else has cruised here. There is absolutely nothing touristy about it. We didn't see another boat all week - only commuter ferries.

For some locals, we were the first Westerners they had ever seen.

They lined the riverfront to welcome us, waving and calling out "Hello, how are you?" Children showed off, somersaulting into the water, swimming after the boat.

A typical seven-night cruise is bookended by five-star hotel stays in bustling cities of sensory overload (Delhi, Calcutta, Varanasi) and an optional extension to Jaipur and the Taj Mahal.

The most memorable two days are spent in Varanasi, where the sight of thousands of pilgrims bathing in the river is unforgettable.

Passengers catch rickshaws through the crazy chaotic streets to attend the sunset and sunrise ceremonies and witness a funeral, where bodies are cremated beside the river - this is culture shock in the extreme.

For details, see [www.haimarktravel.com](http://www.haimarktravel.com) or contact a travel agent.



Pilgrimage to Varanasi



Rickshaw ride through a village



Well maintained religious sites

**Cruise Weekly** is Australia's favourite online cruising publication. In production since 2007, **Cruise Weekly** is published each Tuesday, with a further travel industry update each Thursday.

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Part of the Travel Daily group of publications.

Travel Daily CRUISE WEEKLY Pharmacy DAILY

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